

# CNN - DEATH OF PRESIDENT RONALD WILSON REAGAN - NEWSNIGHT (6-8-2004)

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From Tuesday, June 8th, 2004 CNN NEWSNIGHT coverage of the death of President Ronald Wilson Reagan. Reagan served as the 40th POTUS from 1981 through 1989.

- Coverage runs from 10:00 P.M E.T - 11:00 P.M E.T

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[Music] ronald reagan library in simi valley california tonight this scene the scene that you're looking at has been going on now for a day and a half i guess constantly thousands upon thousands of people have uh have passed by quietly just walking by stopping for a moment some salute some move on just to be there to be a part of this moment tomorrow morning the casket burying the president's body will be flown finally to washington where the official national remembrances will begin until then as we just showed you the people from near and far just to keep on coming here against cnn's frank buckley the outpouring for president reagan three days after his death so great that lines to catch shuttle buses just to get to the library stretched for hours traffic snarled and library officials extended viewing hours just to meet the demand well we were prepared for there to be a fairly great outpouring of affection for the president because as after all this is you know the heart of reagan country but we had no idea was going to be like this to tell you the truth some waited four hours in line to catch a shuttle bus but few if any complained i feel really honored honored to be here even four and a half hours later half asleep at the president's casket some salute others shed tears there are families and individuals boy scouts and senior citizens they spend about two minutes in the presence of the late president my feet hurt my back hurts i'll be 62 this month and there are older people here but it was worth it among those paying respects on this day senator john kerry the presumptive democratic nominee for president kerry in los angeles to attend his daughter's graduation from film school

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graduation from film school canceled over campaigning for the week in observance of president reagan's death and and the people continue to come here tonight we're told at a rate of two to three thousand people per hour some of them true believers aaron others here to be a witness to a moment in history the hours of viewing were extended from 6 pm local time to 10 pm local time to accommodate as many people as possible library officials say they expect 100 000 people in all to see the casket by the time the viewing period ends and today word from nancy reagan that she was moved by what she has seen she released a statement through the president's office saying quote it is unbelievable what i am seeing on tv aaron will there be people who are in line that do not get into the library tonight i don't think so because what they've done throughout the day is they've adjusted the time by which you have to go catch this shuttle bus first it was supposed to be three o'clock local time they said if you didn't get there by three you wouldn't catch it then they said six now it's 7 30. so they've tried to make sure that everyone who makes the effort to get here and gets on a shuttle bus will in fact see the president's casket frank thank you for your work this week frank buckley on the simi valley california 10 years ago president reagan put a public face on a disease that millions of people suffer from quite privately roughly four million americans have alzheimer's a disease whose cause and cure remain stubborn mysteries millions more will develop it as the american population

ages president reagan could have kept his diagnosis private but instead he told the world a decision that raised awareness and some say much more since he told the world a decade ago that he had alzheimer's scientists say there has been steady

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scientists say there has been steady progress into detecting both the causes and identifying possible cures for the disease in 1994 we had just approved the very first drug treatment for alzheimer's disease there are now five that have been approved by the fda funding by the federal government at that time was about 298 million dollars a year it's now almost 700 million dollars a year i think much of that can be attributed to president reagan's statement his willingness to come forward and really the appreciation that the world has for his contributions alzheimer's is a steady progressive brain disorder usually affecting those over 65. it steals their memories their speech their perception of the world around them doctors who see alzheimer's patients and their families say there was widespread awareness that it had afflicted someone as famous as ronald reagan the term alzheimer's disease carries a stigma it can be upsetting to have president reagan publicly announce that he had received this diagnosis 10 years ago i think was tremendously helpful for patients and their families allowing them to much more comfortably deal with the symptoms and with the diagnosis allowing more people to seek treatment at georgetown and other research centers around the country scientists believe one of the keys to finding an alzheimer's cure may lie in the use of stem cells but just before 9 11 the president placed strict guidelines on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research as a scientist i want to pursue every promising avenue that may lead to treatment for these debilitating disease alzheimer's disease parkinson's disease and others so i am all in favor of not closing down any avenues nancy reagan of course issued public calls for more research on stem cells and now some politicians believe that her husband's death

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her husband's death may open the door to a white house change of heart i think there is a chance that this administration may alter its stance on stem cell research but i also thought there was a chance uh before the death of president reagan and the outpouring of a great affection for him and of course the the statements made by nancy reagan if it comes down to politics for the white house then what they'll look at is the polling that shows that a solid majority of americans including those from the religious right support stem cell research finding a cure for alzheimer's may be years and years away with or without stem cell research researchers say that money and political will are keys and that ronald reagan's decade-long battle with the disease may eventually result in helping untold others one other quick item on this bill frist the senate majority leader introduced an amendment to the defense bill the authors of a new book on the conservative movement in america describe ronald reagan this way he was a sectarian they write with an ecumenical spirit a true believer without the usual flaws of the true believer in navigating the ship of politics politicians trim their sails from time to time at least the good ones do here's cnn's jeff greenfield hi ronald reagan do solemnly swear he was of course the symbol of american conservatism and he proclaimed one of its central creeds at the moment he took power it is my intention to curb the size and influence of the federal establishment to get government back within its means and to lighten our punitive tax burden but did he do this he cut taxes in 1981 by 25 percent but

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he cut taxes in 1981 by 25 percent but the next year turned around and raised them by one measure it was the largest tax hike in history and not only did he not abolish the departments of education and energy as he had proposed this bill gives those who have borne america's battles he turned veterans affairs into a new cabinet-level department and while he had this to say about deficits we have piled deficit upon deficit mortgaging our future and our children's future for the temporary convenience of the present the deficit actually doubled on his watch in fact there is enough in reagan's tenure that cuts against the conservative grain that some voices from the liberal corner have begun in recent years to claim reagan as one of their own

sort of last year for example the washington monthly magazine cited several examples of what it called reagan's liberalism his social security reform imposed taxes on benefits that went to the affluent elderly the earned income tax credit gave subsidies to the working poor and under reagan people below the poverty line paid no federal income tax at all moreover a major tax reform package in 1986 shaped in good part by democrats dick gephardt what it is this deduction is about and bill bradley the bill is a powerful force slammed shut a raft of corporate loopholes even as it lowered marginal tax rates in foreign policy reagan's massive defense buildup was designed to prove to moscow that it could not win an arms race so that it might choose the path of disarmament while protesters demanded that reagan back a freeze on nuclear weapons he claimed his real goal was to get rid of them entirely something he and mikhael gorbachev strongly consider doing at the reykjavik summit in 1986 much of the dismay of his staff reagan's conservative admirers note that democrats controlled half or all of the congress during reagan's years so compromise was necessary they also say that the shift in the political terrain was clearly toward the right so much so that bill clinton won in 1992 only after

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that bill clinton won in 1992 only after he threw many liberal orthodoxies over the side well maybe it's not surprising that liberals want to claim a piece of the reagan legacy reagan himself quoted franklin d roosevelt during his 1980 acceptance speech and he often cited john kennedy's tax cutting ideas in support of his own what this really shows is just how long a shadow reagan casts across the breadth of the american political landscape jeff greenfield cnn new york david brooks has been called the liberal's favorite conservative columnist he casts a long shadow himself across the op-ed page of the new york times mr brooks is a recent author of on paradise drive how we live now and always have in the future tense and we're very pleased to see him waited a while nice to have you here there's actually an interesting parallel i think in the news of this moment of the president's passing and one of the themes in the book which is that americans are an inherently optimistic group somehow it will work out yeah when you look you can go back to the westward expansion one of the things people noticed about those pioneers who moved west was first of all they had no clue what they were getting into they just figured something better was there and then they would move west and they'd go past perfectly good farmland figuring that over the next ridge there was something even better and that is a future-minded mentality that reagan had in spades is there this this desire we have for something better all the time bigger and better all the time is it a sign that at some level we are dissatisfied with what we have it's hope and we think hope oh being hopeful is a good thing but hope is a trickster hope it tantalizes you into thinking you should always move on uh you should always get better and it accounts for the fact that we do tend to work hard and rise it also accounts for the fact that we divorce more often we move to suburbs sometimes we're not happy there because we figure if we move to some new place new must be better than old uh sometimes we venture out into the world in ways that seem reckless

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that seem reckless uh in retrospect so if you think if you ask people though they i think all of that is true if you ask people they'd say at some level what they want is mayberry sort of main street usa of the 50s yeah i think what we want is paradise i think this started when people first landed on these shores were europeans they thought well god's plan can be realized here and at the same time we can get rich while doing it and so they wanted some perfect ultimate happiness you go to the magazine rack you look at all these magazines it's just perfect heaven architectural digest perfect homes oprah magazine perfect life it's just perfection all around sorry about one area of imperfection these days iraq you have not been uh altogether optimistic over the last uh few months or so one of the more interesting things you've had to say is that we might have to accept a fair amount of anti-americanism from the iraqis if we're going to get to success right i i supported this war i still support it i still think in the long run it can work out but i wrote a column making this case that in order to win we have to lose and what we have to lose is an election we have to give iraqis an electoral chance to voice their opposition to us at our incompetence and the fact that we try to dominate their country and it's their country and we have no right to do that and so we try to dominate that and we have to give them an early election where they can campaign against us and they can have speeches and ballots and

votes against the us which will be a lot better than bombs and rpgs and missiles are you does it distress you that the arguments that the president used to get into the war turned out to be at least as we sit here today uh inaccurate i'm appalled by the intelligence failure but for me it was never about that i think for me my colleague tom friedman why didn't they make if it was about human rights and i think that was the great argument you could argue it but it was the argument why didn't they make it well i think they did in many respects i sat at several speeches where the president made

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